



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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CONTACT: GEORGE HARDEEN

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

OFFICE – 928-871-7917

CELL – 928-309-8532

pressoffice@opvp.org

Navajo First Lady Vikki Shirley joins students, elderly to walk for wellness awareness in Tuba City, Ft. Defiance

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation First Lady Vikki Shirley tied on her sneakers and joined hundreds of walkers in Tuba City and Kin Da Lichee last week to promote wellness and fight unhealthy lifestyles.

Called “Walking Together for Healthier Nations,” the First Lady on Thursday walked with more than 485 Tuba City students and community members at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation’s 11th annual walk from the Tuba City Chapter to Dinosaur Tracks about 12 miles out of town.



Before the walk, Mrs. Shirley encouraged students to stay healthy throughout their lives by keeping active through walking and by adopting healthy lifestyles.

She warned them of the hazards to underage drinking, in both physical and mental development, and told them to avoid being pressured to drink alcohol now that the time of school proms and graduations is here.

“There are healthier ways to celebrate and have fun without getting into alcohol-related vehicle accidents and making a joyous time tragic for students and their families,” she said.

*Navajo Nation First Lady Vikki walks with Tuba City students during the “Walking Together for Healthier Nations” walk from the Toh Nanees Dizi Chapter House to Dinosaur Tracks by Moenave, 12 miles from town.
Mona Seamon/OPVP Photo*

“President Shirley and I share the same message in promoting healthy lifestyle. We walk and exercise daily and encourage our children to do the same,” she said. “Our elders taught us to get up early, run, eat healthy foods and drink a lot of water.”

William Greeson, TCRHCC event coordinator, said the First Lady is someone who the students like, and listen to.

"Having Vikki Shirley speaking to our local students during the opening ceremony was not only a highlight but she was also a positive role model as she and her staff participated in the walk with the kids," he said.



Navajo Nation First Lady Vikki Shirley gathers with Tuba City students before the start of the "Walking Together for Healthier Nations."
Mona Seamon/OPVP Photo

Michelle Archuleta, TCRHCC Health Promotion, Disease Prevention director, said that in the past, people took the quality of their health for granted and simply went to the hospital when they felt bad, leaving responsibility for their health to someone else.

Those days are gone, she said, because of increasing awareness that it is up to individuals themselves to stay healthy and physically fit.

"When we are taking care of ourselves both physically and emotionally we feel better about ourselves, have increased energy, and our general outlook tends to be that much more positive," she said. "Helping young adults, as well as community members, understand the why as well as the how of the importance of physical activity and being healthy is what our program staff does in the school and chapter setting."

The Kin Da Lichee walk was 35 miles long over two days. It started at the old Fort Defiance Hospital and went through Blue Canyon Road to Sawmill, ending at Fluted Rock Road where participants camped overnight.

"We use this to promote walking and getting people involved with the community," said Shirley Nelson, health promotion coordinator at Fort Defiance Service Unit.

"Having the Office of the President and First Lady's involvement in our health walks, it brings community together," she said. "When leaders speak, people get involved. As the First Lady said today, living a long, healthy life is the goal and teachings of our people. Our children have lost it and it is our duty as leaders and parents to teach it."

She said that approximately 300-to-400 people participated in the walk that ended at Kin Da Lichee.

This year, the Navajo Area IHS sought to promote community involvement through individual walks rather than one walk across the Navajo Nation. Participants ranged from youth to the elderly.

"This walk is very beneficial for the Diné people," said Apache County Supervisor Tom White who participated in the walk. "We need to all go out and exercise to improve our health."

The Navajo Youth Risk Behavior Survey, compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Navajo Health Education Program, found that:

- Obesity in Navajo children has tripled in the past 20 years.
- Native American children consume high amounts of soft drinks, and
- Children risk for obesity is intensified 50 percent with one overweight parent, 66 percent when both parents are overweight.

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